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SUBJECT: PARTICIPATION IN CENSUS MONITORING

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(B) KHARTOUM 155
(C) KHARTOUM 114

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: International donors have expressed their concern that the government-run Census Monitoring and Observation Committee (MOC) is dysfunctional and does not have a well formulated plan for census monitoring and observation. Some donors wish to downgrade their membership status from members to observers, while others believe this sends too strong a political signal too late in the game that the donors believe the census will not be credible. The current MOC plan includes pairing international monitors with Sudanese monitors for the census (though it does not specify if it will accept western monitors). Post suggests that we should take them up on this offer and provide monitors, especially if the MOC can devise a credible monitoring plan. END SUMMARY.

PURPOSEFUL DYSFUNCTION OR AN UNORGANIZED MESS?

¶2. (SBU) On 29 January, international donors met and shared their concerns regarding the Census Monitoring and Observation Committee (MOC), a sub-committee of the government-run Population Census Council (PCC). Donors agreed that the MOC is dysfunctional and has no detailed plan for moving forward with census observation. Furthermore, the donors, who are MOC members, feel that there has been a lack of communication within the MOC, which only meets on a quarterly basis. The donors themselves don't know why they were afforded MOC membership (as opposed to observer status) in 2006 when the committee was established. "The whole thing [the MOC] is a joke - although there is supposed to be one representative from each state, the Southerners don't even attend," said the World Bank. The EC added, "Representatives from the political parties also don't attend. Has anyone ever seen someone there from the Arab League or the African Development Bank?" Donors questioned whether the MOC was dysfunctional purposefully or because of a lack of capacity.

MOC BASICS

¶3. (U) The PCC was created by Presidential Decree 81/2006 and has three sub-committees: advocacy and publicity, monitoring and observation, and finance. MOC membership includes representatives from all states (Northern and Southern), the political parties, civil society, NGOs, the World Bank (WB), the African Development Bank, USAID, League of Arab States, the African Union, the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA), the EU, and France. The MOC is a national body and receives funding both from the GNU and the donors.

¶4. (U) Per the presidential decree, the MOC's stated duties and responsibilities are:
-- Monitoring and observing census execution at all stages and

levels;
-- Ensuring compliance with census established criteria and standards;
-- Ensuring comprehensive coverage;
-- Ensuring transparency of all census procedures and operations;
-- Providing regular reports including recommendations when necessary to the PCC; and
-- Providing report on the final census results to the PCC.

NO CLEAR GAME PLAN FOR MONITORING AND OBSERVATION

15. (SBU) The MOC has no time tables or action plans for census monitoring and observation. The only plan it has, said the WB rep, is one drawn from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) whereby two observers are deployed to each state for a few weeks before, during and after census enumeration. Donors all agreed that only two census monitors per state is not sufficient.

16. (SBU) USAID asked if there was any viable alternative to create an independent monitoring mechanism. The World Bank said that donors had raised the possibility of having international monitors in an earlier MOC meeting, but that both Northern and Southern MOC reps rejected this idea. USAID said it could offer extra observers if the GNU agrees to accept them.

A CALL FOR DONORS TO DOWNGRADE THEIR MEMBERSHIP STATUS

17. (SBU) The European Commission (EC) predicted that, regardless of whether the census is credible, the MOC, which is led by an NCP Chairman, will be "used politically" to publicly announce that the census was conducted fairly and involved no foul-play. If we remain members of this committee, the EC rep explained, we will be tied to

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the MOC's statement of results, whether it is true or false. In light of this vulnerability, the EC called for all donors to jointly downgrade their MOC membership status from member to observer. The World Bank agreed and said, "We [as donors] have no leverage over what happens in the MOC." It was agreed that the EC would draft a letter to the MOC stating donor concern over the MOC's lack of a sound census monitoring mechanism and requesting to change membership status from members to observers. Donors at the meeting agreed to share this draft letter with their embassies and make a determination on whether to support the action. At the time, all donors seemed in favor of supporting a joint downgrade in membership.

TWO STEPS FORWARD, THREE STEPS BACK

18. (SBU) The Census Donor Group met a second time on 5 February to review the plan to present the MOC with a membership downgrade request at a MOC meeting on 6 February. Unexpectedly, the British, the French and the Danish switched gears and expressed concern with the move to downgrade status. The Danish voiced concern that it was "too late" to make such a request (three months before the census) and were backed up by the British who said that such an action would send a signal from the donor community to the GNU authorities that the MOC was "not credible." The French recommended that the letter be positive instead of negative and suggested that the donors send a letter voicing concern about the lack of an observation plan, while at the same time stating continued donor support to the MOC. The World Bank, EC and USG all disagreed and continued to press the donors to jointly request a downgrade in membership status or withdraw from the MOC altogether. "If we remain members, they will use us," said the World Bank. Due to vehement disagreement over a course of action, it was decided that the donors would all attend the 6 February MOC meeting to judge the credibility and seriousness of the MOC before making a decision on membership downgrade/withdrawal.

LOOKING GOOD ON CAMERA, BUT SAYING LITTLE

¶9. (SBU) The MOC held an all-day session, with TV media present, on 6 February in Khartoum to review preparation for the census and reveal a monitoring and observation strategy. The meeting was only attended by two Southerners, Southern Sudan Center for Census, Statistics and Evaluation (SSCCSE) Chairman Isaiah Chol and MOC Head in Juba, Alair Riak Makol. No southern state representatives were present. The meeting commenced with two hours of speeches from the MOC Chairman, MOC spokesman, UNFPA representatives, and Minister of the Presidency and PCC Chairman General Bakri Hassan Salih. All speeches indicated that census preparation is on track. However, few details were provided.

¶10. (U) Southern MOC member Alair Riak Makol presented several critical questions from the Southern perspective: when will the presidential decree for the census come out?; why is the MOC not active on the ground in the South?; what are the funding constraints on the MOC?; and where are the international observers? Makol's comments were followed by the EC, which publicly expressed strong concern to MOC Chairman Dr. Abdulbagi Gailani that there is no information-sharing among MOC members. The EC said, "We are O|;Gz4D,bl=dyHialz08g\$ea%L m&-6720iQbGhPz`obQ=fQhese questions at the meeting.

¶11. (U) GNU Minister of Interior Alzubair Bashir Taha, who is also the Census Security Committee Chairman, stated that troops are ready in each state to deal with any "potential disruptions" to the census. He said that the southern state of Jonglei and areas where the LRA is active are potential flashpoints and assured there would be greater security coverage in such areas. He also said that there is a need for "political resolution" in southern West Kordofan before the census can be successfully conducted there. He claimed that the situation in Darfur is "clear" and that the GNU is "ready to conduct the census peacefully" in Darfur. However, several MOC members (including university professors and northern state representatives) registered their concern over the census in Darfur. They pointed out that rebel, SAF, and Chadian forces are active in the region, which would certainly be a security problem for enumerators. Furthermore, rebel and IDP camp leaders may tell their people not to cooperate in the census (ref B). Minister Taha responded rather unconvincingly that the Ministry of Interior stands ready to "give orders to protect" census enumerators and civilians in the case of the disruption, but he noted that there was not

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enough government financing to do all that was necessary. He suggested that the donors provide more support in order to deal with these issues.

¶12. (SBU) During the final hour of the meeting, an MOC spokesman presented the committee's plan for monitoring and observation. He stressed that it was a "general framework" and that "details are not available now." The plan calls for a total of 50 monitors (two monitors per state - one international, one national) for a period of time before, during and after enumeration. The spokesman explained that the MOC is reviewing CVs for monitors from Sudan, Africa, and the Middle East. After presenting a hastily-prepared and vague three-page document on monitoring plans, the spokesman said, "In a short time all of the details should be available." The international donors immediately expressed their displeasure with the plan. DANIDA, a major financier of the census, said that it was "disappointed" with the general framework and "all of the talk." "Where is the detailed work plan? Isn't that what we, the MOC, were supposed to discuss today?" DANIDA emphasized that the work plan needs the blessing of the full MOC. The WB inquired about the selection process for CVs, the funding of the monitoring plan, and where the monitors would be deployed. The British said they were pleased with the general framework, but that it is "urgent to get the details sorted out. We want the detailed plan to go before the entire MOC for input and approval." The British also raised the question of whether two monitors per state is sufficient. The MOC Chairman responded by saying, "We have no objection to have more observers. Two is the minimum. We will discuss this later." The Chairman finished up the meeting by saying that the MOC is "open and transparent," but that its efforts need more funding.

¶13. COMMENT: All international donors to the census are frustrated

by the MOC's lack of organization and planning and are skeptical of its potential political aims. Some, however, are reluctant to join in a unified stance to downgrade their MOC membership. They fear that it will spur a political fall-out with the GNU, which may in turn damage the ability of international observer missions to participate in the 2009 elections. Although it is unclear whether the MOC is purposefully dysfunctional by design or has real capacity problems, this is the first time that the MOC leadership has indicated it will accept international census observers. Post recommends that the USG offer monitoring and observation assistance to the GNU in order to bolster the MOC monitoring plan that is dreadfully lacking in depth and substance. This could be offered during Foreign Minister Deng Alor's visit to Washington or by SE Williamson on his first visit to Sudan later this month. Provision of observers will highlight the importance of the census and the USG's preparedness to work with the GNU in planning for and executing it. Although the GNU has not accepted such assistance for the census in the past, and may not accept western monitors for the census, we believe it is worth making an offer to demonstrate our shared interest in a successful census. Other donors, such as the World Bank and the European Commission, stand ready to assist as well should the MOC provide a credible observation plan. However, if international and U.S. monitors are allowed to participate and believe that the census is carried out poorly, the USG will need to be prepared to speak out and this would of course further strain US-Sudanese relations.

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